



ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Mass Movements and Global Terrorism

Course Syllabus:
Fall 2012

POL 405
M 6:00-8:30
Morledge-Kimball 225

Dr. Matthew O’Gara
Office: Morledge-Kimball 214
Office Hours: TTh 11:30-12:45, and *all day* MWF (by appointment)
Phone: (406) 238-7384
Email: matthew.ogara@rocky.edu

Course Description:

In the broadest terms, this course will attempt to foster a more sophisticated understanding of the past, present, and future role of terrorism in global politics, with the explicit goal of understanding the economic, social, cultural, and political roots of specific terrorist groups – which will be conceptualized as the product of mass movements in general.

More properly understood as political violence, terrorism is nothing new. Before delving into this topic in earnest, we will need to establish a working definition of terrorism that differentiates such behavior from protest, hooliganism, and legitimate revolution, and throughout the course we will attempt to understand both the ideologies and tactics of terrorist organizations. Thus we will avoid making simplistic dismissals of individual terrorists as psychopaths or deviants. Instead we will look at the inner logic and rationality that exists between and among group members, in an effort to establish a sophisticated model of cultural understanding.

Therefore, once we have established a definitional understanding of terrorism, we will examine structural and cultural variables, explore a series of case studies, and finally discuss effective and/or likely counterterrorism policy. Therefore, the outline of the course will be divided thematically into five overlapping sections:

1. Definitions: Terrorism vs. revolution; old and new terrorism.
2. Motivations: Who becomes a terrorist and why; why terrorism is a preferred choice over non-violent participation, or why does it sometimes evolve out of non-violent movements.
3. Group Behavior: Tactics and targets; organizational structure.
4. Case studies: Individual groups examined in depth, with a specific focus on the social and cultural factors that generate and reinforce group identity.
5. Implications: Counterterrorism; expectations for future attacks.

Required Readings:

Mariano Azuela, *The Underdogs*.

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*.

Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer*.

Rex Hudson, *Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why* (available online).

Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*.

Robert Taber, *War of the Flea*.

US Army/USMC, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (available online).

Assessment Outcomes:

In this course, the following History & Political Science major assessment criteria are advanced:

1. Analyze, interpret, and critically evaluate major political issues and/or historical events;
2. Demonstrate familiarity with the major theories and thinkers in the field;
3. Understand the intellectual importance of academic research;
4. Frame research questions designed to produce independent and cogent analysis;
5. Assess, use, and synthesize different kinds of evidence from a variety of academic sources;
6. Understand the difference between opinions and substantiated scholarly claims;
7. Effectively utilize and appropriately cite academic sources;
8. Write papers essentially free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and spelling.

Course Policies:

The first requirement of each student is to understand that this is an academic environment and as such it is necessary that there is a high degree of civility, respect for fellow students, and respect for the material. You are expected to do *all* assigned readings, and you must participate in class if you hope to earn a passing grade.

1. Missed Classes: This course covers a great deal of material and meets just once a week; therefore repeated absences will not be tolerated. Students are allowed one absence, regardless of circumstance. Subsequent absences will result in your course grade being rescaled down by 1/3; i.e. a student with four absences will have their final grade reduced 1 point on a 4.0 scale.
2. Missed Assignments: If you do not turn in a graded assignment your maximum grade in the course will be rescaled along a 90/80/70/60 scale; i.e. if you fail to hand in a paper worth 20 percent of your grade, your highest possible grade in the class will be a B, regardless of your average on a 4-point scale.
3. Late Papers: Papers will lose one full letter grade per class session late. No exceptions.
4. Plagiarism and Cheating: Neither will be tolerated, and if a student is caught doing either they will fail the course and I will recommend to the Dean of Students that said student be expelled from school.
5. Electronic Devices: the use of any electronic device is strictly prohibited in this course. This includes e-readers, as I will not participate in the demise of the written word.
6. Email: I check my email daily but I prefer not to use it as a means of conversation. Email should be used only for quick, non-emergency questions and for setting up appointments for face-to-face meetings in my office. Also, for institutional as well as technological reasons, only communicate with me via your official @rocky.edu account.

Weekly Book Reviews:

Each student is required to turn in a 1-2 page (12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, with one-inch margins) typewritten review on the readings and/or the film viewed for each week. These are to be combined synopses and analyses of the topics from that session's readings (you will be given a detailed handout as a guide). Additionally, they should demonstrate your ability to connect each author's work to the overarching ideas expressed in the course description.

These assignments will be graded and collectively amount to 20 percent of your final grade in the course, so careful reading is imperative. Also, because these assignments are intended to serve as facilitators for class discussion, late papers **will not be accepted for any reason.**

Annotated Bibliography:

On March 10 (week 9 of the semester) you are required to turn in an annotated bibliography with a minimum of 20 academic sources. Because this is a component of a scholarly paper, bibliographies are to rely exclusively on peer-reviewed, academically credible sources; please note that **internet web pages are not valid sources for academic research.** Final papers will lose one full letter grade per website cited.

Complete Drafts:

On December 3 (the final week of the semester) you are required to submit a *complete* draft of your paper. This version is expected to be polished and worthy of submission for your final grade – yet it will be evaluated and critiqued before final submission, in order to ensure that to the greatest extent possible your final paper is of the highest intellectual caliber and demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of all course materials. Drafts will be graded on a simple pass/fail basis: all complete papers will receive an A, whereas papers that are not finished products will receive an F.

Research Paper:

Your grade in this class will be based primarily on one research paper which should be roughly 25 pages in length. Papers will essentially be “research reports” on a particular terrorist group, which will be assigned to students randomly. You will receive a detailed outline to follow, focusing your research and ensuring a comprehensive final product. Also, these papers are to rely almost exclusively on peer-reviewed, academically credible sources; please note that **internet web pages are not considered valid sources for academic research.** Papers will lose one full letter grade per website cited.

Note: papers should be composed in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, with normal one-inch margins and stapled. Papers will lose 1/3 of a grade if they exceed the stated limits, are not paginated properly, or are not stapled. Late papers will lose one full grade per day late.

Grading:

Papers will be graded on an A-F scale and will be averaged as follows:

Book Reviews:	20 percent
Annotated Bibliography:	10 percent
Complete Drafts:	20 percent
Final Paper:	30 percent
Participation:	20 percent

Grading Criteria:

These are the standards I adhere to when I grade essays. Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference, as do split grades (e.g. B-/C+). Grades are based on the evidence of the essay submitted, not on effort or time spent.

A

Excellent in every way (this is not the same as perfect). This is an ambitious, perceptive essay that grapples with interesting, complex ideas; responds discerningly to counter-arguments; and explores well-chosen evidence revealingly. The analysis enhances, rather than underscores, the reader's and writer's knowledge (it doesn't simply repeat what has been taught). There is a context for all the ideas; someone outside the class would be enriched, not confused, by reading the essay. Its introduction opens up, rather than flatly announces, its thesis. Its conclusion is something more than a summary. The language is clean, precise, often elegant. The reader should feel enlightened and educated for having read the paper. There's something new in your analysis, something perhaps only you could have written and explored, in this particular way. The writer's stake in the material is obvious.

B

A piece of writing that reaches high and achieves many of its aims. The ideas are solid and progressively explored but some thin patches require more analysis and/or some stray thoughts don't fit in. The language is generally clear and precise but occasionally not. The evidence is relevant, but there may be too little; the context for the evidence may not be sufficiently explored, so that I have to make some of the connections that the writer should have made clear for me. This is a solid essay whose reasoning and argument may nonetheless be rather routine (the limitation is largely conceptual).

C

A piece of writing that has real problems in one of these areas: conception (there's at least one main idea but it is fuzzy and difficult to understand); structure (non-linear development of your ideas); use of textual evidence (weak or non-existent -- the connections among the ideas and the evidence are not made and/or are presented without context, or are simple platitudes and generalizations); language (the sentences are often awkward, dependent on unexplained abstractions, sometimes contradict each other). The essay may not move forward but rather may repeat its main points, or it may touch upon many (and apparently unrelated) ideas without exploring any of them in sufficient depth and without a developmental flow. Punctuation, spelling, grammar, paragraphing, and transitions may be a problem.
-or- an essay that is largely plot summary or "interpretive summary" of the text, but is written without major problems.
-or- an essay that is chiefly a personal reaction to something. Well-written, but scant intellectual content -- mostly opinion.

D and F

These are efforts that are wildly shorter than they ought to be to grapple seriously with ideas.
-or- those that are extremely problematic in many of the areas mentioned above: aims, structure, use of evidence, language, etc.;
-or- those that do not come close to addressing the expectations of the essay assignment.

Participation:

The majority of class time will be devoted to discussion of the assigned readings. Discussion can include (but is not limited to) an analysis and/or critique of the author's position, a comparison of the assigned work to another text, or debate as to the meaning or merit of a given work (or particular points therein).

Class participation is evaluated on quality rather than quantity. Comments need not mirror the position of the author (or the professor). You are graded not on the "correctness" of your position, but rather on your analysis of the material and your ability to articulate your ideas. You don't have to be at the center of every debate, but students who make little or no effort to enter discussions will receive a lower participation grade. Discussion will become lively, heated even. Always respect the positions of others. When you disagree with someone, be sure to criticize the *idea* and not the person.

Participation will be graded according to the following criteria:

A

The student in this grade range arrives in class each day thoroughly prepared with comments and questions on the assigned reading. Comments reveal that the student has read carefully; this student occasionally initiates the discussion without waiting for the professor to do so. This student does not, however, try to dominate the class, but listens carefully to the remarks made by fellow class members, and responds as readily to these as to the instructor's questions.

B

The student in this grade range participates in most discussions, although not as fully or reliably as the student described above. There is evidence of having done the reading. This student pays attention to the comments of the other students.

C

The student in this grade range participates only intermittently, and is more willing to discuss broad, general questions than to engage in concrete analysis of an assigned text. Sometimes unprepared, this student lacks interest in the ideas of other members of the class, neglects to bring the proper text to class, and is often inattentive.

D or F

The student in this grade range seldom if ever participates.

Things that lower your participation grade:

- * Not paying attention in class
- * A ringing cellphone
- * Talking to your neighbor or holding conversations separate from the class discussion
- * A student who is seen using their cell phone for any reason will receive an F as their final grade in the course

NOTE: Unlike paper grades, participation will *not* be given plus/minus or split grades, and your final grade is weighted in a manner such as to make it impossible for you to receive an A for the course if your participation grade is not an A.

Semester Schedule:

Week 1:

8/27

Introduction and Course Outline

Week 2:

9/3

Labor Day

Week 3:

9/10

Hudson, *Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why*. (book: 1-108; pdf: 1-71)

Week 4:

9/17

Hoffer, *The True Believer*.

Week 5:

9/24

Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5 (183-204 only), 7

Week 6:

10/1

Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Concerning Violence”

Week 7:

10/8

Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, Chapters 1-5

Week 8:

10/15

Robert Taber, *War of the Flea*, Chapters I, II, III (25-29), X, XI

Week 9:

10/22

US Army/USMC, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, Appendices A-D

Week 10:

10/29

Azeula, *The Underdogs*

Week 11:

11/5

“Cultural Narratives and Discourse Analysis” (handout)

Week 12:

11/12

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE
(minimum 20 academic sources)

Week 13:

11/19

Film 1: *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)
Individual tutorials on research progress

Week 14:

11/26

COMPLETE DRAFTS DUE
Individual tutorials required prior to final submission

Week 15:

12/3

Drafts returned

12/10

REVISED RESEARCH PAPERS DUE